

News Release



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Downtown LA's Newest Park

State Parks Begins Public Hearings For Final Cornfield Park Plan

LOS ANGELES -- The Cornfield Advisory Committee, which has been working for nearly one year on a vision for the 32-acre Cornfield property near downtown Los Angeles, is scheduled to present its final report and recommendations on development and use of the Cornfield property to the Acting Director of State Parks, Ruth Coleman, on Thursday April 3, 2003. The presentation will take place at St. Peters Italian Church, 1039 N. Broadway from 6:00 to 9:00 PM (check-in is from 5:30 to 6:00 PM). The public is invited and encouraged to attend.

At this same meeting, State Park planners will begin the transition from the Cornfield Advisory Committee's vision phase to the General Plan phase, which will seek public input on options for implementing the vision. The General Plan phase will consist of a series of public meetings that will give the public an opportunity to help determine appropriate uses, recommend how the park can fit into the bigger picture that includes the various local parks in the Los Angeles River corridor, propose ways to educate the public on the important cultural and historical aspects of the park, and discuss options for appropriate operations of the park.

"This meeting is a milestone in this planning process and we applaud the work of the Advisory Committee for getting us to this day," said Coleman. "This meeting will serve a dual purpose. First, we will be accepting a report that contains solid and well thought out recommendations for a world class park. Second, we will use those recommendations as our foundation for beginning the development of the General Plan for this property."

"We want the public to stay involved," said State Parks Southern Division Chief Ted Jackson. "We are entering a new phase, where additional public comment will be critical to taking the Advisory Committee's work to the next level. The Advisory Committee gave us the vision. The next step will turn that vision into reality."

The 36-member Cornfield Advisory Committee was created through legislation by former State Senator Richard Polanco of Los Angeles. The group, comprised of community leaders and representatives of various interest groups, held a series of public meetings over the last nine months, reaching consensus on its final advisory report. The legislation required that the final report be presented to the Director of the State Department of Parks and Recreation as an advisory document.

In developing the report, members of the Cornfield Advisory Committee said they understood the unique opportunities presented by the Cornfield site. The Committee also recognized the importance of fulfilling an immediate need for a park within the park deficit communities surrounding the site. They recommended linkages with downtown, El Pueblo, Elysian Park, LA River, River Center, Taylor Yard, Confluence Park, Griffith Park, Chinatown and Solano Canyon, calling those linkages essential for the success of the park. The committee agreed that this park, properly designed, should enhance the natural environment, celebrate the social, historical, and cultural environment of the surroundings neighborhoods, and enrich the lives of the people who reside in and visit them.

In its final report, the Advisory Committee chose four major themes, which members said should be the guiding principles for the vision of the Cornfield. Those themes are as follows:

- **Connectivity:** The advisory committee said the critical issue for the connectivity of the site is that it fit into the broader design of the Los Angeles River greenway. Members referred to this site as the first jewel in an emerald bracelet of the emerging Los Angeles River greenway stretching from the San Gabriel Mountains to the Pacific Ocean. The committee said the Cornfield should be recognized as an ecological as well as cultural entity, providing a venue for environmental education in a highly urbanized setting. In addition, the committee said this site should help connect human communities, as a rich, multi-ethnic cultural corridor of communities and historic districts.
- **Cultural/Historical:** Committee members agreed that the Cornfield property provides a conduit to understanding the story of Los Angeles from its earliest beginnings. This location, said the committee report, presents a unique opportunity to forge a connection of people, history and place by opening a window to understanding the past and tracing the present into the future. The committee pointed out important historical elements of the site, including the Zanje Madre, or mother ditch, that irrigated early settlements on the site. It also referred to the first transcontinental railroad depot to serve the Los Angeles area which was located on the site.
- **Recreation:** The report states that the park should be designed to actively engage and welcome participation from residents of all ages and nearby communities and that recreational facilities should be open and inviting. In addition, it states that high-quality recreational facilities should be designed so that relaxation and reflection coexist with team sports and individual exercise. It referred to this park as a unique opportunity to address the recreational needs of the surrounding under-served communities. It called for a balanced park that includes large open areas for soccer and other sports, integrated harmoniously with the natural setting and the cultural and historical values at stake in this urban California State Park.

- **Transportation:** The report states that transportation has long been prominently associated with the Cornfield site, from the railroads and trolleys in the recent past to the Gold Line currently under construction and the freeways that criss-cross the neighboring communities. It stated that the park’s design should recognize the important transportation history of the site and embrace environmentally friendly transportation systems envisioned in the area’s future. It suggests a “heritage trail” that could connect other parks and destinations in the area.

Members of the public who cannot attend the April 3rd public meeting and workshop can attend a second meeting, a makeup meeting, which will offer another opportunity to hear about the General Plan process and provide public input. The second meeting will be held April 5th, at the Castelar Elementary School Library, 840 Yale Street, from 10:00 AM to 1:00 PM (check-in at 9:30 AM). All facilities are wheelchair accessible.

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